263
4 S7

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

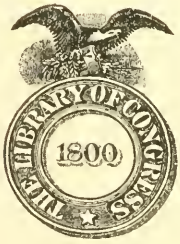
Chap. E [illegible]

Shelf. M4S1

PRESENTED BY

A. R. Spofford

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



MASSACHUSETTS

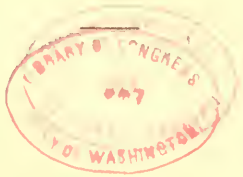
IN THE

AMERICAN REVOLUTION

BY

AINSWORTH R. SPOFFORD

AN ESSAY READ BEFORE THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SOCIETY OF THE SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
APRIL 10, 1895



CITY OF WASHINGTON
PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY
1895

PRESS OF W. F. ROBERTS,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

MASSACHUSETTS

IN

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

HONORED by the invitation to address you upon the part borne by Massachusetts in the War of Independence, I deem it not inappropriate to preface my remarks by a rapid sketch of some of the conditions prevailing in all the colonies in the years immediately preceding the epoch of the American Revolution.

If we look through that most interesting historical period—the last quarter of the eighteenth century—we shall find in America an abundance of intellectual activity. By a long series of events and experiences, in the colonies and in the mother country,

the minds of men had been prepared for independence. Many of the emigrants to America were exiles from political or ecclesiastical tyranny, whose decendants inherited those principles of strong self-reliance and hatred of arbitrary power which bore fruit in the revolutionary epoch. The isolation of the colonies, in an age before steam navigation had brought America near to Europe, contributed to weaken the influence of foreign ideas and associations, and to develop the power of domestic ones. By its own inherent energies, no less than by maternal unkindness, the child America was being gradually weaned from England. The democracy of the town-meeting, the union of neighborhoods against the Indians, the broad freedom of a virgin land, with its illimitable forests, the organized colonial legislatures, the birth of the newspaper, the wide diffusion of education, the liberty of the press—all conspired with their remoteness from the mother country to sow the seeds of independence. It is a notable fact, in our estimate of the complex influences which wrought out this great result, that the growing intellectual life of the colonies had gradually diminished

the once overshadowing prevalence of British books and British thought in America. From the first printing press, in 1639, at Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the end of the first year of the Revolution, in 1775, there were printed in the colonies more than 8,000 books and pamphlets. Out of this number, surprisingly few were of trans-Atlantic origin. Allowing for cases of doubtful authorship, and counting as American only the works actually written by residents in the colonies, I have found that about 7,350 of the total publications of the American press before the Revolution were of American origin, and only about 650 of foreign origin, or less than one in thirteen. This too, leaves out of account the writings of Americans actually published in London during that long period of pre-revolutionary activity. These would swell the lists of purely American books to a very considerable extent. In view of so pregnant a fact of literary history, the widely diffused notion that American ideas and their expression were all formed upon foreign standards, and that the colonies had no native literature, must be relinquished.

It would, indeed, be unreasonable to ex-

pect from a people engrossed in the questions and agitated by the passions of a revolution, literary works which could claim admiration as literature. Works of fancy and imagination are rarely born amid the rude campaign, or the shock of battle, and great political controversies afford no place for the refinements of speech. The principal writers of the period under review were engaged, not in creating a literature, but in founding a nation. The serious problems, political and social, which confronted them, not only controlled their choice of subjects, but to a great degree influenced their style.

While the outbreak and progress of the revolution incontestably led to a great expansion of the human mind, that movement was felt rather in the field and the council, than in the closet or the schools. The war against England, which required for its successful prosecution great powers and distinguished talents, happily appeared to create and to foster both. Whenever the occasion arose, there were always found men worthy of the occasion. Those who had manifested no special commanding faculties in the piping times of peace, were found, under the rousing stimulus of war,

to possess a genius for action and for utterance which did signal service to their country's cause. Fired with the love of freedom, and animated by a lofty patriotism, men wrote with an energy and persuasive force hitherto unexampled in colonial literature. A certain magnanimity took the place of those narrow and sectional feelings which had too much prevailed before the Revolution. The people of the different colonies had known but little of each other, and unreasonable jealousies and discords were the fruit of this want of intercourse. The raising of the first Continental army was a great step toward union. Men organized to fight for a common cause, with a common leader, and against a common foe, came to look upon one another as brethren. But more powerful, doubtless, than this sentiment born of military union, was the feeling of the necessity of political union, urged upon the people with consummate power by writers and speakers who represented the best intellects and the ripest thought of the time. Indeed, in the contests of the American Revolution, as of so many other revolutions, there is little room to doubt that the pen was mightier than the sword.

Great was the intellectual stimulus which the agitation of these momentous events contributed to the life of the people. They were not the listless consumers of a foreign literature, born in the dull age of the Hanoverian dynasty, but the Americans began to be independent of British thought, as of British institutions. The best writing of the time, rude but strong, had in it the free breath of the woods, and the flavor of the soil. The pens which championed the cause of the people against the monarchy were at their best when they forgot to quote. The energies of a hitherto divided and scattered people, now fast becoming nationalized, poured themselves forth in vigorous protests and appeals. The newspapers became energized with a new life, and the conspicuous idea of that life was the principle of self-government. The press became prolific in pamphlets, and instead of that great redundancy of sermons which characterized the printed literature of the century before the Revolution, there were more and more of political essays and discussions. The people read eagerly what was written earnestly, and published cheaply. More than 100,000 copies of Thomas Paine's

"Common Sense" were sold, at eighteen pence a copy, a prodigious circulation for those days, and a most notable one for any political pamphlet now. The addresses and state papers of the Continental Congress were scattered in broadsides and newspaper "extras," and their signal ability in stating with convincing power the cause of colonial liberty amply justified the lofty eulogium of Chatham and the encomiums of Burke.

That the effect of the Revolution was to infuse new life and vigor into the national literature we have the testimony of Dr. Benjamin Rush, who wrote, soon after the close of the Revolutionary War,—"From a strict attention to the state of mind in this country, before the year 1774, and at the present time, I am satisfied that the ratio of intellect is twenty to one, and of knowledge as one hundred to one in these States, compared with what they were before the American Revolution."

In the political history of every people, it is of great interest to trace the origin of those safeguards to the liberties of the citizen which find expression in free nations in their fundamental law. Massachusetts has

the distinction of having been the first American Colony to enact a Bill of Rights, or a fundamental statute or constitution to guarantee certain liberties, privileges, and immunities to all the people. This remarkable document, styled "the Body of Liberties," was enacted by the General Court (as the Massachusetts legislature was always called) in 1641. It ante-dated, by nearly half a century, the famous "Bill of Rights," adopted by the Parliament of England in 1689, and went beyond that instrument in its assertions of popular freedom. It was not so much a supplement to English Law as a substitute for it. Massachusetts, only twenty years after its first settlement at Plymouth, established a code distinguished for its justice and liberality, and far beyond what in that age had been attained in the polity of any nation. It sets out by declaring that no man's life, liberty, or property should be endangered but by virtue of an express law. It declares that no monopolies should be granted; that every man should have the right to take part in town meetings; that all men should have free right of removal; that no judicial proceeding should be vitiated by technical errors or

mistakes; that in all actions at law, the parties should have the right of jury trial, and of challenge; that all court records should be open; that representatives to the legislature should be chosen by the votes of all free-men; that every town should make its own local laws and regulations; and that the select men, or governing body of every town, should be chosen by a vote of the people. This free constitution, carried as it was, into practical effect in every town, planted seeds which bore abundant fruit in the great after-struggle for American liberty.

The patriotic devotion which inspired all the American Colonies in the inception, the progress, and the final triumph of the War of Independence was nowhere more conspicuous than in Massachusetts. To the intellectual resources of her sons were conjoined a spirit, a courage, and a zeal for liberty, which made an indelible impression upon the whole country, and still shine upon the page of history. It was upon Massachusetts soil that the first blood of the Revolution was shed; and it was from her patriotic sons that the earliest protests against arbitrary power were heard, although

in other colonies the agitation for absolute independence from Great Britain was quite as early as in Massachusetts. The three leading capital cities of the country were successively captured and held by the British army. Boston was the first of these; but the stubborn resistance of the Massachusetts soldiery, and the splendid generalship of Washington, forced the evacuation of Boston after a much briefer occupation by the British than befell her sister cities, New York and Philadelphia. All the military events which occurred on Massachusetts soil—important and ever memorable as they were—took place during the first year of the Revolution. Other regions witnessed more decisive battles, and continued for a much longer time, the immediate theatre of war; but Massachusetts soldiers marched or sailed to every colony, and bore their part in every important battle, from Bunker Hill down to Yorktown. Out of twenty-one Major-Generals chosen to command the American armies, during the eight years struggle, six were of Massachusetts, or nearly one-third of the whole number; and ten out of the forty-nine Brigadier-Generals appointed belonged to the same gallant

and patriotic State. And in the rank and file of the Continental army, out of an aggregate of 37,363 men enlisted in 1775, 16,449 (or nearly one-half) were Massachusetts men. This is not remarkable, in view of the fact that the first military preparations had to be made in the colony first occupied and attacked by British soldiery. But at later periods of the war, the soldiers of the Old Bay State were found as vigorously fighting for their compatriots in other colonies, as for their own homes and firesides. Thus, in 1777, long after the evacuation of Massachusetts by the enemy, we find that 12,591, out of 68,720 troops enlisted, were from Massachusetts; being a larger number than any other state contributed. The same lead was maintained throughout the war, except in 1779 and 1780, when Virginia's soldiers and military actually in the field exceeded those of Massachusetts by a few hundred, while in 1782 (which witnessed the virtual close of the struggle), Massachusetts put 4,423 men in the field, out of a total of 18,006 in the Continental Army, Virginia having only 2,204 at the same period.

As the first military resistance to British

power occurred in Massachusetts, so, the first moral and political revolt against British oppression had its birth in the same colony. Some years before the odious Stamp Act, with the enactment and repeal of which the continent resounded, came the earliest opposition to arbitrary power. In 1761, attempts were made to enforce collection of a tax of six pence a gallon on molasses, by a summary process styled "Writs of assistance." This writ invested the revenue officers of the Crown with plenary powers of search and seizure, and became most odious to the people. At a judicial hearing, James Otis argued against this oppression with all the resources of his great and powerful mind. "I am determined, to my dying day," said he, "to oppose all such instruments of slavery on the one hand, and villainy on the other, as this Writ of assistance is. I argue in favor of British liberties, against a power, the exercise of which cost one King of England his head, and another his throne. Reason and the Constitution are both against this writ. No act of Parliament can establish such a writ; for every act against the Constitution is void."

This great speech of James Otis, said John Adams, "breathed into this nation the breath of life. With a depth of research, a profusion of legal authorities, a prophetic glance of his eyes into futurity, and a rapid torrent of impetuous eloquence, he hurried away all before him. American independence was then and there born."

So far John Adams. But neither the logic nor the eloquence of Otis availed to turn aside the purpose of a government bent upon levying taxes upon its colonies, by whatever means. Writs of assistance were issued whenever the King's revenue officers asked, and no redress was found in a subservient judiciary against the wrongs perpetrated in the name of the law. The obsequious Judge Hutchinson (afterward the royal Governor of Massachusetts), though a native of the province, took sides with power against his countrymen.

Then followed the Stamp Act of 1765, which laid a direct tax upon all the business transactions of the people, and made all violations of it subject to Admiralty jurisdiction, without the right of trial by a jury. This odious measure was received with consternation, mingled with indignant pro-

tests, in every colony. It was denounced as a tyrannous imposition, levying taxation without representation, for the colonies were not permitted either to tax themselves by their own legislative bodies, which existed in every province, nor to send representatives to the parliament of England. It deprived British subjects in the colonies of rights heretofore always enjoyed, and struck down at one blow all the muniments of British liberty.

It was this act, followed the same year by the mutiny act, which authorized the billeting of soldiers in private houses, which raised a storm in the colonies, re-echoed by the liberals in Parliament, and led to the repeal of the Stamp Act. It did more; it produced the first movement ever made looking to a union of all the colonies in self defense. In June, 1765, James Otis proposed, and the legislature of Massachusetts voted, to invite a meeting of committees from the legislatures of the several colonies, "to consult together on the difficulties to which they were reduced by the operation of the late acts of Parliament." This movement, originated, to her immortal honor, by Massachusetts, and earnestly seconded by

all the southern colonies, brought about the first American Congress, which assembled at New York in October, 1765.

It is very noticeable, that during the ten years ensuing, while the public mind of the American colonies was slowly ripening toward independence, all classes of opinion still rested firm in the conviction that they were British subjects. As British subjects, the Tories declared their obligation to submit to King and Parliament; and, as British subjects, the patriots protested their rights to all the liberties of Englishmen. None were as yet found who held to a separation from the mother country, even in idea. Still, the persistent injustice of England awakened more and keener resentment as time rolled on. The repeal of the Stamp Act soon gave place to new impositions. Heavy duties were laid upon glass, paints, and paper, and a tax of three pence a pound on all tea imported into the colonies. Massachusetts soon met the crisis by resolving to use none of the articles tainted by an unconstitutional tax. "We will form one universal combination," said the men of Boston, "to eat nothing, drink nothing, and wear nothing imported from Great Britain."

To those who marvel at the excited resistance made by these colonists to a trifling tea tax of six cents a pound (a rate of duty on that article often exceeded in both countries since), it must be suggested that the recusant people were not protesting against the tax, but against the manner of its imposition. The measure of Massachusetts patriotism was not the three-penny standard of the tax—it was the absolute unconstitutionality of any tax at all. They acted after the principle laid down in that immortal verse of Shakespeare:

> "Rightly to be great,
> Is not to stir without great argument;
> But greatly to find quarrel in a straw,
> When Honor's at the stake."

The honor of every British subject in America was bound up in the right of their duly constituted legislative assemblies to levy all the taxes, whether for the Crown, or for the colonists themselves. The wives and daughters of Massachusetts resolved to drink no more tea; and the papers of the day declared that "whoever shall purchase and use that article will drink political damnation to themselves."

The spirit of freedom was too rife in

colonial assemblages to be long tolerated. The legislatures of New York and Massachusetts were dissolved by the royal governors, followed by the proroguing or dispersion of those of other colonies. Massachusetts quickly acted: the Boston committee called on the towns to send delegates to a convention in Faneuil Hall. Ninety-six towns, nearly every one in the province, were represented, and in September, 1768, requested the governor to convene the constitutional assembly of the colony. He refused to receive their petition, declared that they had committed treason, and warned them to disperse, or they should be made to repent of their rashness. The convention disregarded the insulting message, issued their protest against taxation by Parliament, and against a standing army, renewed their petition to the King for redress of grievances, and adjourned after a six days' session. It was a great moral victory, felt throughout the colonies, and even as far as the court of St. James.

It was not in the nature of things that peace and quiet should long continue between an oppressed and exasperated people, and a hireling soldiery quartered

among them. The Boston Massacre of 1770 soon followed, and the streets of an American city were for the first time stained with blood, wantonly shed by the armed minions of power. After the excitement of this event, the forbearance of the citizens was once more evinced when the acquittal of the soldiers took place, on insufficient evidence.

But the coming revolution grew. Governor Hutchinson had again refused to call the assembly of the province together, and haughtily denounced the town meetings which assembled to discuss public matters. By denying this right, he directly impeached the institution of town governments, one of the oldest and most sacred rights of New England, firmly entrenched in the customs and the democratic sympathies of the people.

At length, in November, 1772, Samuel Adams proposed that great patriotic measure, a "Committee of Correspondence," of twenty-one members, to state the rights of the Colonists, and to communicate regularly with every town in Massachusetts by letters of advice and mutual counsel. Thus was founded that political co-operation which led by steady growth, and extension

through other colonies, to the union of scattered efforts and energies into a firm confederacy of patriotic men, dedicated to one common aim.

Immediately, the answers of the towns of Massachusetts to the masterly statement of grievances sent out from the central committee came pouring into Boston. The original manuscripts of these unique and stirring memorials of the heroic age in American history formed one of the most precious portions of the historian Bancroft's library. Here are a few brief examples of the free spirit that breathes through these documents of a hundred and twenty years ago.

The people of Fitchburg declared that "Liberty is a most precious gift of God our Creator to all mankind, and is of such a nature that no person or community can justly part with it." The town of Leicester thus spoke: "We prize our liberty so highly, that we think it our duty to risk our lives and fortunes in defense thereof." Marlborough put on record its sentiment that "death is more eligible than slavery." Shirley's inhabitants declared—"we will not sit down easy until our rights and liberties

are restored." Gloucester resolved—"when the civil rulers betray their trust, and abuse the power the people have reposed in them, they forfeit the submission of the subjects; and to oppose and resist in that case is not to resist an ordinance of Heaven." And there came from Brooklyn, Connecticut, town meeting, presided over by Colonel Israel Putnam, these stirring words: "Those rights and privileges which were obtained by our worthy ancestors at a great sum, we will maintain inviolate, even at the risk of our lives and fortunes, in spite of the united combination of earth and hell."

Samuel Adams, among whose papers these relics of the times that tried men's souls were preserved, wrote of them—"By means of a brisk correspondence among the several towns in this province, they have wonderfully animated and enlightened each other. * * * An empire is rising in America; and Britain, by her multiplied oppressions, is accelerating that independency which she dreads." The high-minded and eloquent Joseph Warren wrote, "The mistress we serve is Liberty, and it is better to die than not to obtain her."

Then came those days of stress and storm,

of sore trial and conflict, whose history is familiar to you all; the days of the shutting up of the harbors of Massachusetts, by the Boston Port Bill; of the outlawry of Hancock and Adams; of the threatened dragging of Massachusetts patriots to England for trial; of the sending out of regiment after regiment of British troops to coerce obedience; of the suffering and want of Boston in its beleaguered state; of the sympathy and solid gifts of the other colonies,—Connecticut sending her a thousand sheep, all New England wheat, corn, and cattle, and Fairfax County, Va., a liberal gift of money, Geo. Washington heading the subscription with fifty pounds; of the meeting of the first Continental Congress at Philadelphia, in 1774; of the arming in the country districts throughout Massachusetts, at the urgent instance of the Committee of Safety; of the seizure by British troops of colonial arms and powder; of the first bloody skirmish of the Revolution at Lexington and Concord; of the excitement and exasperation which spread like wildfire through the country; of the resolve of Massachusetts to raise immediately fourteen thousand men; of the sanguinary Bunker Hill battle, lost by the Americans after that

brave and stubborn fight, inflicting upon the British losses which more than doubled their own; of the military measures of Congress, and its election of General Washington as Commander-in-Chief; of his long and patient struggle with obstacles of every kind, want of discipline, want of money, want of powder, want of tents, want of supplies, military jealousy, envy, and insubordination; of the perilously short enlistments, constantly exchanging veterans for raw troops, a mischief felt all through the war; of the discontent of Congress that the enemy were not speedily driven from Boston; of the dignified and temperate replies of Washington, showing that he had maintained his post in the face of the enemy for six months without powder, holding the twenty regiments of the British cooped up in Boston; of the anxiety of the whole country for some decisive stroke; of the greater anxiety of Washington, in the lonely night vigils in his ill-provided camp; of his invincible faith and courage, inspiring his troops with his own resolute spirit; of the exodus from Boston of almost all its inhabitants except the Tories, till there were left in the city but six thousand Americans, with

nearly 10,000 British troops; of the ceaseless activity and vigilance of Washington, enforcing order and discipline in every part of his camp; of his consummate skill and dispatch in fortifying the heights of Dorchester in a single night, thus rendering the town of Boston untenable by the enemy; of the speedy result of this strategic movement, in the complete evacuation of the city by the British army; and of Washington's transfer of his command to New York, after expelling the enemy from New England.

Read the history of America's first campaign in the fascinating pages of Bancroft, the idealist historian, who, if he sometimes mingles an optimistic philosophy with his facts, portrays the march of events in a style at once classic, full, and picturesque.

The fixed purpose of the British government to conquer America soon transferred the theatre of war from Massachusetts soil to the central and southern colonies. There were repeated on a larger but not more devoted scale, the heroic struggles which had marked the conflict in the old Bay State. Let us borrow a few felicitous words from the eloquent speech of Daniel Webster in the Senate of the United States, in 1830.

"Mr. President, I shall enter on no encomium upon Massachusetts—she needs none. There she is:—behold her, and judge for yourselves. There is her history: the world knows it by heart. The past, at least, is secure. There is Boston, and Concord, and Lexington, and Bunker Hill—and there they will remain forever. The bones of her sons, fallen in the great struggle for Independence, now lie mingled with the soil of every State, from New England to Georgia; and there they will lie forever."

And thus he paid the meed of honor to Massachusetts and the southern colonies:

"Shoulder to shoulder they went through the revolution—hand in hand they stood round the administration of Washington, and felt his own great arm lean on them for support."

Let me now recall, in the briefest manner, the characteristics of some of the patriots and writers of Massachusetts, whose intellectual force made them conspicuous leaders in the great contest of the American colonies for self-government.

John Adams will ever stand out as one of the most illustrious of the men who made

the Revolution, and whose character gave it permanent success. His copious writings, while not free from the faults which marked his strong individuality—vehement, ardent, and hasty—were nevertheless most influential factors in moulding the public opinion of his time. The leading part taken by him in the Continental Congress, where his eloquence was "as a flame of fire," has been well described by Webster, whose magnificent paraphrase of Adams's expressions in favor of independence, expanded into the speech in defense of the immediate declaration, leaves little to be desired by the student of oratory.

The lofty eloquence of Josiah Quincy, whose "Observations on the Boston Port Bill" (published in 1774) did much to concentrate the opposition of New England to Great Britain, was heard in 1773 in Faneuil Hall: "It is not, Mr. Moderator, the spirit that vapors within these walls that must stand us in stead. The exertions of this day will call forth events which will make a very different spirit necessary for our salvation. Look to the end. Whoever supposes that shouts and hosannas will terminate the trials of the day entertains a childish fancy."

Samuel Adams was a pillar of strength to the popular cause, as well by the power of his writings, as by the nobility of his character. His "Statement of the Rights of the Colonists" (1772), and his pamphlet, "The True Sentiments of America" (1768), are clear and forcible pleas for freedom.

Of the earliest champions of American liberty, James Otis, of Massachusetts, was one of the foremost. Endowed with a powerful reason, and gifted with brilliant eloquence, he spoke and wrote with a masterly energy which drew forth the admiration of strong men, like John Adams, while his "Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved" (1764), was the first great literary effort in behalf of what afterwards became independence. With logic the most convincing, and eloquence the most fervid, he set forth the constitutional rights of the people of all the colonies to self-government.

General Joseph Warren, whose early death at Bunker Hill filled Massachusetts with mourning, was of the true race of patriots. High-minded, chivalrous, modest, and brave, his stirring eloquence added a charm to his personality which drew to him the admiration of the people. He early prophesied

that the connection with the mother country must sooner or later end, and he was singled out by British hatred as "leader of the rebellion." He wrote to Josiah Quincy, in 1774, "Great Britain may depopulate North America; she never can conquer the inhabitants." Volunteering as a private in the ranks, his lofty spirit went instantly from the scenes of earth, amid the roar of the cannon at Bunker Hill, repeating almost with his last breath the words of the Roman poet—"it is sweet and honorable to die for one's country."

Joseph Hawley, of Northampton, was one of the earliest, ablest, and most determined champions of the rights of the American colonies. In the assembly of Massachusetts, in 1766, Hawley declared, "the Parliament of Great Britain has no right to legislate for us." This was the first denial in a colonial legislature of the power of Parliament. And in August, 1774, Hawley wrote to John Adams—"After all, we must fight!" This ante-dated Patrick Henry's famous utterance of the same words in the Virginia Convention of March, 1775, by six months. Mr. Adams relates that he read Hawley's letter to Patrick Henry in Con-

gress: Henry listened with great attention, till the climax was reached, "we must fight," and then he broke out—"*By God*, I am of that man's mind!" "I considered," adds Mr. Adams, "that this was a sacred oath, upon a very great occasion." No thought of profanity entered into it. I refer to this incident here not so much to hint priority of the utterance of the Massachusetts patriot over the patriot of Virginia; Henry's lofty soul had no need of the inspiration of other men; but I cite it to show how heart leaped to heart, when the supreme hour approached, and the sword of the sons of liberty was thrown in the balance, against the last argument of Kings.

I should fail in discharging the duty of the occasion, were I to omit mention of the part borne by the noble and patriotic women of Massachusetts during the Revolutionary struggle. Only the briefest notice can here be made, as time is wanting for any detail.

Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, was of the Quincy stock, and was a close student from early childhood. Married in 1764, the outbreak of war brought to her home many fears and privations, for her husband was a proscribed man. Her keen sympathies were

continually drawn upon. When Adams went to the Congress at Philadelphia, the copious and intimate correspondence which passed between the husband and wife forms one of the most interesting and instructive chapters in the history of the times.

Mrs. Adams's sister, Mrs. Peabody, was a devoted patriot, who thus wrote to John Adams during the height of the revolutionary struggle: "Lost to virtue, lost to humanity must that person be, who can view without emotion the complicated distress of this injured land. Oh! my brother, oppression is enough to make wise people mad."

Mrs. Lucia Knox, wife of a Massachusetts Major General, who afterwards became Washington's first Secretary of War, was of an aristocratic lineage. She left her parents, who were Loyalists, and who wished her to marry a British officer, to wed the Boston bookseller, whose fine person and quick intelligence had captivated her, and who soon after became General Knox. She had a strong and well cultivated mind, joined to much beauty, fascinating manners, and a sanguine, cheerful temperament. Gen. Knox, it is said, often deferred to his

wife's judgment, regarding her as a superior being; and even Washington was impressed by her character and manners. She was one of the few officers' wives who followed the army in frequent camp visits. On the British occupation of Boston, Mrs. Knox escaped with her husband, and joined the American army at Cambridge, having Gen. Knox's sword concealed by quilting it inside the lining of her cloak. That, surely, was a wife well worth having, to a soldier and a patriot. The point of this incident becomes obvious, when we recall the fact that arms were most scarce and precious in that year of grace, 1775.

Mrs. Dorothy Hancock, whose husband's immortal name is writ large at the head of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, was the daughter of Edmund Quincy, and a lady of taste, elegance and fashion. She shared the many honors, as well as the trials of her proscribed husband, and was a fugitive from Concord when the fight of the embattled farmers was going on—

"Who fired the shot heard round the world."

Hancock was himself that day a hunted fugitive.

Mrs. Mercy Warren, in whose honorable

and cherished name Massachusetts takes just pride, was the sister of James Otis, the illustrious patriot of Boston. Her early addiction to study gave her a phenomenal fame in the province as a scholar. Her copious writings are full of classical allusions, contributing much to the quality of their learning, while not always adding to their attractiveness. She was a most ardent patriot through all the Revolutionary struggle, and among her correspondents were Jefferson, both the Adamses (John and Samuel), Elbridge Gerry, John Dickinson and Gen. Knox. Her sympathies were keen, and she sheltered and aided many of the sons of liberty at her house. Her "History of the American Revolution," published in 1805, in three volumes, is her chief literary work.

But my discourse must end, with a word of grateful recognition of the useful labors of your association, in recalling the minds of the men of to-day from their easy and uneventful lives, to the commemoration of the arduous struggles, privations, and sufferings of those who wrought out the revolution. It is to them that we owe the assertion and the maintenance of American Liberty. They laid broad and deep the

foundations of a government which transferred America from the sovereignty of kings, to the sovereignty of the people. They braved every danger, endured every trial, sacrificed fortune, comfort, even life itself, teaching to posterity the sublime lessons of endurance and self-denial. They illustrated the lines of the oriental poet:—

"Though love repine, and reason chafe,
There came a voice without reply—
"'Tis man's perdition to be safe,
When for the truth he ought to die."

We are apt to boast of our advanced civilization, our intellectual enlightenment, our superior accomplishment in all the arts of life. But are there no shadows in the bright picture of modern progress? Is there no danger in the march of luxury, and the worship of wealth? If our republic is to outlast those of Greece and Rome, once so splendidly endowed with arts, refinement and genius, but now, alas! numbered among the things that were, we must avoid their errors. We need to cultivate less of the lower aims of life, and more of that spirit of high resolve, of devotion to duty, that iron in the blood, which made our forefathers what they were. If it were given to us to

open the seals of the undiscovered country, if we could now hear the voices of Otis, and Adams, and Warren, and Quincy, and Washington, and Jefferson, and Henry, what would be the counsel of those illustrious Americans of the past, to us Americans of to-day? Would they not admonish us—"Be true to your great inheritance; have faith in your country; build your institutions on the firm foundation of public justice and private virtue: Stand up to the stature of God's image that is in you: then shall your republic succeed; then shall you stand, a fulfillment of the prophecy of all noble hearts,—a revelation to the ages of the greatness and the brotherhood of man."

MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE

AMERICAN REVOLUTION

BY

AINSWORTH R. SPOFFORD

AN ESSAY READ BEFORE THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SOCIETY OF THE SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
APRIL 10, 1895

CITY OF WASHINGTON
PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY
1895

0 011 800 856 A